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Beauty on the Beach



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Judge weighing abortion pill is favorite of conservatives

By L. WHITEHURST/A. RICHER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Texas judge hearing a case that could throw into jeopardy access to the nation's most common method of abortion is a former attorney for a Christian legal group who critics say is being sought out by conservative litigants because they believe he'll be sympathetic to their causes. U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, who's considering a lawsuit aimed at putting a nationwide halt to use of the drug mifepristone, was appointed by President Donald Trump and confirmed in 2019 over

fierce opposition by Democrats over his history opposing LGBTQ rights. Mifepristone blocks the hormone progesterone in the body and is used with the drug misoprostol to end pregnancy within the first 10 weeks. Kacsmaryk is hearing arguments in the case on Wednesday, days after he took the unusual step of telling attorneys during a status conference not to publicize the hearing because the case has prompted death threats and protests and he believed "less advertisement of this hearing is better."

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In this image from video from the Senate Judiciary Committee, Matthew Kacsmaryk listens during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington, on Dec. 13, 2017.

Associated Press

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Judge weighing abortion pill is favorite of conservatives

Continued from Front

A former federal prosecutor and lawyer for the conservative First Liberty Institute, the judge has ruled against the Biden administration on other issues, including immigration. He was among more than 230 judges installed to the federal bench under Trump as part of a movement by the Republican president and Senate conservatives to shift the American judiciary to the right.

Interest groups have long attempted to file lawsuits before judges they see as friendly to their points of view. But the number of conservative lawsuits filed in Kacsmaryk's Amarillo courthouse — where he is assigned all new cases as the sole district court judge — has spawned accusations that right-wing plaintiffs are seeking him out because they know he's likely to side with them.

"Why are all these cases being brought in Amarillo if the litigants who are bringing them are so confident in the strength of their claims? It's not because Amarillo is convenient to get to," said University of Texas law professor Stephen Vladeck. "I think it ought to alarm the judges themselves, that litigants are so transparently and shamelessly funneling cases to their courtroom." If Kacsmaryk rules against the drug, the Food and Drug Administration — which has approved using mifepristone — is expected to quickly appeal the ruling. Clinics have said they could carry on with using one other drug alone to terminate pregnancies if necessary but that approach is slightly less effective.

During his confirmation hearings, Kacsmaryk told lawmakers it would be "in-



Three members of the Women's March group protest in support of access to abortion medication outside the Federal Courthouse on Wednesday, March 15, 2023 in Amarillo, Texas.

Associated Press

appropriate" for a judge to allow their religious beliefs to impact a matter of law. He pledged to "faithfully apply all Supreme Court precedent."

"As a judicial nominee, I don't serve as a legislator. I don't serve as an advocate for counsel. I follow the law as it is written, not as I would have written it," Kacsmaryk said at the time. Before the abortion pill case, Kacsmaryk was at the center of a legal fight over Trump's "Remain in Mexico" policy, which required tens of thousands of migrants seeking asylum to wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court.

In 2021, he ordered that the policy be reinstated in response to a lawsuit filed by the states of Texas and Missouri. The U.S. Supreme Court overruled him and said that the Biden administration could end the policy, which it did last August. But in December Kacsmaryk ruled that the administration failed to follow federal rulemaking guidelines when terminating the

practice, an issue that the Supreme Court didn't address.

He has also ruled that allowing minors to obtain free birth control without parental consent at federally funded clinics violated parental rights and Texas law.

In other cases, he has ruled that the Biden administration wrongly interpreted part of the Affordable Care Act as prohibiting health care providers from discriminating against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. And he sided with Texas in ruling against Biden administration guidance that said employers can't block workers from using a bathroom consistent with their gender identity.

In another case — brought by states challenging a Department of Labor rule — the Justice Department wrote in a recent court filing that "there is no apparent reason—other than judge shopping" that explains why the lawsuit was filed in Amarillo.

Kacsmaryk's decisions have been "consistent with what a lot of conservatives were hoping for, and a lot of progressives were fearful of," said Daniel Bennett, an associate professor at John Brown University in Arkansas, who wrote a book on the conservative Christian legal movement. "This is not a judge who's necessarily going to be riding the fence."

Kacsmaryk's detractors said his past writings and legal work revealed extremist views and animus toward gay and transgender people. In articles before being nominated, he wrote critically of the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision that established a nationwide right to an abortion and the Obergefell decision that legalized same-sex marriage nationally. In 2015, he slammed an effort to pass federal gender identity and sexual orientation protections, writing that doing so would "give no quarter to Americans who continue to believe and seek to exercise their

millennia-old religious belief that marriage and sexual relations are reserved to the union of one man and one woman."

A year later, he signed a letter that quoted another article as describing the "belief that one is trapped in the body of the wrong sex" as a "fixed, irrational belief" that is "appropriately described as a delusion." Republican U.S. Sen. Susan Collins of Maine was among those who opposed Kacsmaryk's nomination, citing what she described as an "alarming bias against the rights of LGBTQ Americans and disregard for Supreme Court precedents."

Kacsmaryk's defenders say he has been unfairly maligned.

Mike Davis, founder of the Article III Project, a conservative judicial advocacy group, said Kacsmaryk has shown no evidence of bias on the bench. He noted that Kacsmaryk was deemed "qualified," by the American Bar Association, which means he satisfied what the group describes as "very high standards with respect to integrity, professional competence and judicial temperament."

"These allegations that he's biased are completely unfounded and they unfairly conflate his legal advocacy with bigotry," Davis said. "These Democrat politicians are sending a message to Christians and other people of faith that they are not allowed in the public square."

Before joining the bench, Kacsmaryk worked as an assistant U.S. attorney in Texas and was involved in such cases as the prosecution of Khalid Ali-M Aldawsari, the former Texas Tech University student from Saudi Arabia convicted in a failed bomb plot. □

U.S., Russian military chiefs resume contact to discuss drone

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR** and **TARA COPP**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he spoke to his Russian counterpart on Wednesday about the destruction of a U.S. drone over the Black Sea, which had brought the two countries closest to direct conflict since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine a year ago. It was the first call between Austin and Defense Secretary Sergei Shoigu since October.

"I just got off the phone with my Russian counterpart, Minister Shoigu," Austin said at a Pentagon press briefing. "As I've said repeatedly, it's important that great powers be models of transparency and communication, and the United States will continue to fly and to operate wherever international law allows."

The U.S. military said it ditched the Air Force MQ-9 Reaper in the sea after a Russian fighter jet struck its propeller while it was flying in international airspace. Russia has denied that it caused the incident. The U.S. has said it was working on declassifying surveillance footage from the drone that would show



Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, right, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Celeste Wallander, attend a virtual meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, Wednesday, March 15, 2023, at the Pentagon in Washington.

Associated Press

Tuesday's crash.

That Austin and Shoigu were talking underscored the seriousness of the encounter over the Black Sea. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, contact between U.S. and Russian military leaders has been limited, with Russian officials refusing to take U.S. military calls in the early months of the war. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman

of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he also planned to talk to his Russian counterpart, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces.

Gerasimov was named the new commander of the Russian forces in Ukraine in January and its previous commander demoted in an apparent sign of Rus-

sian President Vladimir Putin's dissatisfaction with the state of the war, which has been stalemated.

There were still questions as to whether Russia meant to down the drone, even though the moments that led up to its crash were "intentional," Milley said.

"We know that the intercept was intentional. We know that the aggressive

behavior was intentional," Milley said. However, whether the collision itself was intentional was still unclear, he told reporters at the briefing.

Milley said the drone likely sank in waters that were 4,000 to 5,000 feet (1,200 to 1,500 meters) deep.

If the call between Austin and Shoigu was de-escalatory in private, it was not apparent from Russia's public statements.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters earlier Wednesday that Russia has declared certain areas of the Black Sea off-limits to any aerial traffic during the conflict and suggested the U.S. was trying to provoke an escalation through the flights. The drone crashed near Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized in 2014 and illegally annexed. "Any incidents that could provoke confrontation between the two great powers, the two largest nuclear powers, raise very serious risks," Lavrov said.

Austin and Shoigu first spoke about Russia's invasion of Ukraine in May 2022. At the time it was the highest level U.S.-Russian contact of the war. □

Stormy Daniels meets with prosecutors investigating Trump

By **JENNIFER PELTZ** and **DEEPTI HAJELA**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Stormy Daniels' lawyer said the porn actor met with prosecutors Wednesday as former President Donald Trump's ex-lawyer testified before a grand jury investigating hush money paid to Daniels on Trump's behalf. Daniels' attorney, Clark Brewster, tweeted that Daniels met with and answered questions from Manhattan prosecutors and was willing to be a witness. The news came as Trump's former attorney, Michael Cohen, was giving his second day of testimony before the grand jury. Daniels tweeted her thanks

to her attorney for "helping me in our continuing fight for truth and justice."

A message seeking comment was sent to the Manhattan district attorney's

office.

"I feel great," Cohen told reporters as headed into what he expected to be his final day of testimony.

In the waning weeks of



Adult film actress Stormy Daniels arrives for the opening of the adult entertainment fair Venus in Berlin, on Oct. 11, 2018.

Associated Press

the 2016 presidential campaign, Cohen said he made a \$130,000 payment on Trump's behalf to Daniels, who at the time had been in negotiations to tell her story on television.

Daniels has said she had a 2006 sexual encounter with Trump that she didn't want, but didn't say no to. Trump says it never happened. The former president's lawyer said Trump was invited to testify before the grand jury but has no plans to do so. Federal prosecutors in 2018 charged Cohen with campaign finance crimes related to the payment, and a similar \$150,000 payout he helped arrange to the Playboy model Karen McDougal, arguing that

they amounted to impermissible gifts to Trump's election effort. Trump also denied having an affair with McDougal.

Cohen pleaded guilty. Trump was never charged by federal prosecutors, however. Manhattan prosecutors have been examining whether any state laws were broken in connection with the payments or the way Cohen was paid by the Trump Organization for his work to cover up the alleged affairs.

Cohen and federal prosecutors said the company paid him \$420,000 to reimburse him for the payment to Daniels and to cover bonuses and other supposed expenses. □

Northeast digs out from winter storm, faces power outages

By **RODRIQUE NGOWI** and **KATHY McCORMACK**
Associated Press

PITTSFIELD, Mass. (AP) — Parts of New England and New York were digging out of a nor'easter Wednesday that caused tens of thousands of power outages, numerous school cancellations and whiteout conditions on the roads.

The storm began Monday night and lasted throughout Tuesday, dumping as much as 3 feet (91 centimeters) of snow and gusty winds. Others got just a few inches or a wintry mix. More high winds and below-normal temperatures were in Wednesday's forecast before a warm-up later in the week.

"The storm is still centered off the New England coast and there's still some snow showers wrapping around the backside of the system that is impacting portions of New England," National Weather Service meteorologist Frank Pereira said. He added the system is expected to "gradually work its way off to the East."

Some of the highest snow totals reported were 35 inches (89 centimeters) in



Plows, at right, try to pass nearly stopped traffic, due to weather conditions, on Route 93 South, Tuesday, March 14, 2023, in Londonderry, N.H.

Associated Press

Peterborough, New Hampshire, and in Ashby, Massachusetts, about 15 miles away (24 kilometers), the National Weather Service said. At least 2 feet (60 centimeters) of snow fell in parts of northern New York and the Catskill Mountains, with Indian Lake in New York's Adirondack Mountains recording 31 inches (79 centimeters).

"It just snowed, and snowed, and snowed," said Geoff Settles, a super-

visor at a manufacturer who lives in Peterborough. "My wife and I were helping some of the neighbors dig out. Literally, we had to shovel five and six different times just to keep it from being basically up to our chest." Settles, who grew up in Leominster, Massachusetts, remembered blizzards there in the late 1970s. "I would say this is the most snow I've seen all my life," he said Wednesday.

In Pittsfield, Massachusetts,

which got at least 18 inch (45 centimeters) of snow, Michael Garvey was using his snow blower to clear his sidewalk and help a neighbor dig out his driveway.

"I've lived here my whole life and I've seen some snowstorms in April, so it doesn't surprise me at all," the 71-year-old retired Berkshire County Sheriff's Office worker said.

"We got teased a couple of weeks ago when the temperature was in the

50's, but back to winter." About 185,000 customers in the region were without power by mid-morning Wednesday, according to the PowerOutage.us tracking site.

"We are still expecting this to be a multiday restoration effort," Unifil spokesperson Alec O'Meara said. Crews from New York and Pennsylvania arrived to help bring back power in parts of Massachusetts and help assess damage from trees and downed lines.

There were concerns about roofs weighed down by the snow. An inflatable sports arena dome collapsed in Goffstown, New Hampshire, which received about 15 inches (38 centimeters) of snow.

It wasn't immediately known whether anyone was inside at the time or if there were any injuries.

Several cows were killed when a barn collapsed at a dairy farm in Dracut, Massachusetts. The owners of Shaw Farm said in a statement Tuesday that they "experienced one of life's unexpected challenges," adding that no staff members were hurt. □

N.Y. diocese facing flood of lawsuits files for bankruptcy

By **MICHAEL HILL**
Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The embattled Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany became the latest diocese in New York to seek bankruptcy protection Wednesday as it faces hundreds of lawsuits alleging sexual abuse. Bishop Edward Scharfenberger announced the Chapter 11 filing after months of negotiations between the upstate New York diocese and lawyers representing plaintiffs over a potential settlement.

The Albany diocese, like others in the state, is dealing with a deluge of lawsuits dating to when New York temporarily suspended the statute of limitations to give victims of childhood abuse the ability to pursue even decades-old allega-

tions against clergy members, teachers, Boy Scout leaders and others.

"The decision to file was not arrived at easily and I know it may cause pain and suffering, but we, as a Church, can get through this and grow stronger together," Scharfenberger said in a release.

The bishop said that as cases brought under the state's Child Victims Act were settled, "our limited self-insurance funds which have been paying those settlements, have been depleted." He said the bankruptcy filing was the best way to ensure that all survivors with pending litigation receive some compensation. The action halts legal actions against the diocese and will allow it to develop a reorganization plan that

will determine available assets, Scharfenberger said. Dioceses across the nation have filed for bankruptcy protection in recent years. In New York, Albany is the fifth of eight dioceses to take the action, a list that includes those based in Buffalo, Rochester and Rockville Centre on Long Island.

Some attorneys representing plaintiffs against the Albany diocese accused it of using bankruptcy as a legal tactic.

"We urge everyone to see the Diocese's strategy for what it is: chicanery designed to perpetuate a \$600 million corporation's pattern of decadence, deception, and denial," said attorney Jeff Anderson in a statement.

New York temporarily set

aside its usual time limit on civil lawsuits for victims of childhood sexual abuse for a two-year period ending in August 2021. More

than 9,000 lawsuits were filed against churches, hospitals, schools, camps, scout groups and other institutions. □



Newly ordained Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger, left, is helped with his Crosier by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, April 10, 2014, during the installation of the tenth Bishop of the Albany Diocese at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Albany, NY.

Associated Press

Jewish Americans press Israeli leaders to compromise

By JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A senior delegation of Jewish-American leaders on Wednesday paid a flash visit to Israel to urge leaders to find a compromise over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's contentious plan to overhaul the country's judicial system.

The arrival of some 30 leaders from the Jewish Federations of North America marked a rare foray by the American Jewish community into domestic Israeli affairs and reflected concerns that the turmoil inside Israel could spill over to Jewish communities overseas.

Eric Fingerhut, the president and chief executive of the Jewish Federations, said the 24-hour visit, coming at short notice, illustrated the "grave concern and worry" the Israeli debate has raised among American Jews. Netanyahu's allies, a collection of ultra-Orthodox and ultranationalist parties, launched the overhaul in January days after taking office. The program aims to weaken Israel's Supreme Court and would give Netanyahu's allies control



A man holds a sign , don't come back, and an Israeli flag during protest against plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to overhaul the judicial system, ahead of Netanyahu's visit to Germany in Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv, Israel, Wednesday, March 15, 2023.

Associated Press

over the appointment of the nation's judges.

They say the plan is needed to curb an outsized influence of unelected judges over national policy. But critics say the plan will destroy Israel's fragile system of checks and balances and that Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges, has a conflict of

interest. Critics also fear that the rights of LGBTQ people and minority groups could be harmed issues that have raised concerns among American Jews.

Tens of thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets each week to protest the sweeping overhaul. High-tech leaders, Nobel-winning economists and prom-

inent security officials have spoken out against it, military reservists have threatened to stop reporting for duty and even some of Israel's closest allies, including the U.S., have urged Netanyahu to slow down. Repeated efforts by Israel's figurehead president, Isaac Herzog, to broker a compromise have stuttered. □

U.N. warns gangs consuming Haiti despite help for police

By DÁNICA COTO

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— The U.N.'s special envoy to Haiti warned Wednesday that the ongoing training and resources the international community is providing to Haiti's national police force is not enough to fight increasingly violent gangs.

Helen La Lime, head of the U.N.'s Integrated Office in Haiti, unexpectedly joined an Organization of American States meeting in Washington, D.C., saying it's time to look at new partnerships as she called once again for the deployment of a specialized foreign force.

"We're not getting the job done," she said. "We need to get down to the busi-

ness of building this country back."

Powerful gangs have been infiltrating once peaceful communities in the Haitian capital and beyond, with

experts estimating that they now control about 60% of Port-au-Prince. They have pillaged neighborhoods, raped adults and children and kidnapped hundreds

of victims ranging from U.S. missionaries to a hot dog street vendor in a bid to control more territory, with violence worsening since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. "It is urgent for the OAS...to understand that the worsening security situation on the ground has reached its peak, and armed gangs now roam the country unfettered," said Victor Génés, Haiti's foreign affairs minister. Top Haitian officials including Génés and Prime Minister Ariel Henry have repeatedly sought international boots on the ground, a request first made in October that has gone unheeded by the U.N.'s Security Council, which has instead implemented sanctions. □



A parent, carrying his child after picking him up from school, runs past police as they carry out an operation against gangs in the Bel-Air area of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Friday, March 3, 2023.

Associated Press

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Musk brought internet to Brazil's Amazon. Criminals love it.

By **FABIANO MAISONNAVE**
Associated Press

ATALAIA DO NORTE, Brazil (AP) — Brazilian federal agents aboard three helicopters descended on an illegal mining site on Tuesday in the Amazon rainforest. They were met with gunfire, and the shooters escaped, leaving behind an increasingly familiar find for authorities: Starlink internet units.

Starlink, a division of Elon Musk's SpaceX, has almost 4,000 low-orbit satellites across the skies, connecting people in remote corners of the Amazon and providing a crucial advantage to Ukrainian forces on the battlefield. The lightweight, high-speed internet system has also proved a new and valuable tool for Brazil's illegal miners, with reliable service for coordinating logistics, receiving advance warning of law enforcement raids and making payments without flying back to the city.

Agents from the Brazilian environment agency's special inspection group and the federal highway police rapid response group on Tuesday found one Starlink terminal up and running next to a pit, an officer who participated in the raid told The Associated Press. He spoke on condition of anonymity over concerns for his personal safety.

They also seized mercury, gold and ammunition, and destroyed fuel and other equipment used by miners in an area known as Ouro Mil, controlled by Brazil's most feared criminal organization, known as the First Command of the Capital, according to federal investigations.

Since taking office this year, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has sought to crack down on environmental violations, particularly illegal mining in Yanomami land, Brazil's largest Indigenous territory.

In recent years, an estimated 20,000 prospectors contaminated vital waterways with mercury used to separate gold. They have



In this handout photo provided by the Ministry of Communication, Brazil's then-President Jair Bolsonaro, left, and Tesla and SpaceX chief executive officer Elon Musk shake hands during a meeting in Porto Feliz, Brazil, May 20, 2022.

Associated Press

disrupted traditional Indigenous life, brought disease and caused widespread famine.

The environment agency, known as Ibama, has seized seven Starlink terminals in Yanomami land over the past five weeks, the agency's press office said. Illegal miners have long used satellite internet to communicate and coordinate, but until now that entailed sending a technician, usually by plane, to install a heavy, fixed antenna that cannot be carried off when mining sites move or are raided. And the connection was slow and unstable, especially on rainy days.

Starlink which first became available in Brazil last year and has spread rapidly solved those problems. Installation is do-it-yourself, the equipment works even on the move, speed is as fast as in Brazil's large cities and it works during storms. Starlink has long viewed the Amazon as an opportunity. That was underscored by Musk's visit to Brazil last May, when he met with then-President Jair Bolsonaro.

"Super excited to be in

Brazil for launch of Starlink for 19,000 unconnected schools in rural areas & environmental monitoring of Amazon," Musk tweeted at the time.

That project with the government hasn't advanced, however. SpaceX and the communications ministry haven't signed any contract, and only three terminals were installed in Amazon schools for a 12-month trial period, the ministry's press office said in an emailed response to questions.

Nevertheless, Starlink has taken off in the region and begun ushering in change. In Atalaia do Norte, on the western reaches of the Brazilian Amazon near the borders with Peru and Colombia, Rubeney de Castro Alves installed Starlink at his hotel in December. Now, he can make bank transfers and conduct video calls. He even started bingeing Netflix.

"There are so many new things to watch that I'm not even sleeping," Alves said, chuckling.

His son once flew all the way to Manaus, the state capital 1,140 kilometers (708 miles) away, just to

negotiate with a group of tourists via conference call. Today, internet at his 11-room hotel in Atalaia do Norte is more reliable than in Manaus, and he bought a second terminal for his tour boat to enable communications on its 10-day voyages, Alves said.

With high demand for internet, dozens of the riverside town's 21,000 residents flock to Alves' hotel each day. Its balcony is a meeting point for teenagers who spend hours playing online games on their phones.

"It made a revolution in our city," Alves said.

A world away, in Ukraine, Starlink has yielded advantages on the battlefield in its war with Russia.

Ukraine has received some 24,000 Starlink terminals that allow continued internet in the most vulnerable regions of the southeast even amid ongoing Russian shelling. In large Ukrainian cities, authorities have set up "points of resilience" that offer free internet along with hot beverages.

The benefits of connectivity were immediately apparent to bad actors in the Amazon, Hugo Loss, operations coordinator for Brazil's

environment agency, told the AP in a phone interview.

"This technology is extremely fast and really improves the ability to manage an illegal mine," Loss said. "You can manage hundreds of mining sites without ever setting foot in one."

Another official with the environment agency told AP it is just beginning to expel miners from the Yanomami territory and the spread of Starlink has complicated that mission. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of concerns about personal safety.

An unauthorized reseller of Starlink in Boa Vista, the gateway for travel into Yanomami territory, has been marketing the units in a WhatsApp group for illegal miners and promising same-day delivery. Her price for a terminal is \$1,600 six times what Alves pays for service at his little hotel in Atalaia do Norte.

Others are selling the Starlink terminals on Facebook groups for illegal miners, like one called "Fanatics for Prospecting."

As lawbreakers have gained access to superior internet service, authorities have started using Starlink themselves.

Federal agents installed a terminal at a new checkpoint on the Uraricoera River an important corridor for miners entering Yanomami territory. The official who informed the AP about the Tuesday raid used Starlink to send photos and even heavy video files of their operation.

Brazil's environment agency told the AP via email that it, along with other federal bodies, is studying how to block Starlink's signal in illegal mining areas, calling it crucial to stopping the activity.

The AP emailed James Gleeson, SpaceX's Communications Director, questions about Starlink's presence in Brazil and its use by illegal miners in remote areas, but received no response. □



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Mrs. Jocelyn Croes recognized as new director of the Department of Foreign Relations

(Oranjestad)—Since March 15th, the Department of Foreign Relations of Aruba has known a new director in Mrs. Jocelyn M.M. Croes. She is the first woman to occupy this position and is the successor to Mr. Edwin Abath, who retired a year ago.

Mrs. Croes has an ample and long trajectory within the government, the international branch and global diplomacy, with a focus on cooperation between countries and international organizations.

Since 2002, Croes has worked in various positions within the government of Aruba, and has served as Minister Plenipotentiary for Aruba in the US between January 2008 and August 2014. Before her govern-

ment work, she worked for organizations within the United Nations in New York, Africa and Asia. Croes studied Politics and International Relations in the US, France and The Netherlands.

As it is already known, Aruba is a country with international orientations. Covid has shown the ways our world is interconnected as also how Aruba can optimize solutions and be resilient through international connections during challenging times like this.

To achieve this, the department plays an important role; one that will keep augmenting its importance in the next coming years, considering the developments on a global level.

The department also deploys a key role in regards to cooperation within the Dutch kingdom, relationships between different countries and international organizations. Therefore, it is important to have a new director with ample experience and relevant knowledge of the priorities of the international budget and developments of the island. It is also important for the person in charge to have a good network on a local and international level and knowledge of the latest developments around the world, so that Aruba can keep being active and amplify its role on an international scale.

During her trajectory as a professional, Mrs. Croes has worked on various topics such as security, disarmament,



gender equality, education, energy, economic and financial development, and social and sustainable development. She has made sure to create opportunities for Aruba. She represented the Aruban government internationally, negotiated international agreements and treaties and is known to be

proactive and "get things done." Considering Mrs. Croes' extensive experience and knowledge, the prime minister is confident that Croes will be a great addition to the department. Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes wishes Mrs. Croes all the success in her new position. □

Task Force to review pricing dilemma within tour companies

(Oranjestad)—It is no secret that a few tour company workers quarrel amongst each other at the shipping dock when it comes time to gather tourists for tours around the island. Considering the fact that the building in front of the dock—previously occupied by the

Department of Public Works (DOW)—will soon go under renovations, a question has emerged on whether there will be more regulations implemented to control the situations taking place on the dock.

The director of Aruba Ports

Authority, Mark Figaroa, stated during a press conference Monday morning that the organization will be reviewing the complaints filed in connection to tour company controls around the times when new cruise ships dock.

"We understand that there are various challenges concerning this topic, and we are currently working on various plans in collaboration with an established task force (Cruise Tourism Task Force). Thought this had not been properly organized during the pandemic, the operation is now back on track and the team is working to pick up on their operation and to improve it. The task force consists of various stakeholders, including the police corps and ATA. They all are a part of our efforts in searching for the best solutions for this dilemma," Figaroa assured. The confrontation between company operators in front

of tourists because of pricing can leave an ugly view of the island. In the soon-to-be newly-renovated building, there will be an Information Center, where tourists can find information on Aruba's culture, top visiting sites and more.

Figaroa also mentioned that they are currently discussing with other stakeholders concerning the fights surrounding pricing. They know that this issue is prevalent, "but we have certain projects in the pipeline that will be dealt with and where we can look for a solution to minimize and even avoid these types of confrontations," he stated. □



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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Marriott's Aruba Ocean Club



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure to recognize Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. These visitors were respectively honored with a certificate acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love to the island of Aruba. The honor certification is presented

on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests whom have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

- Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitor of Aruba
 Mr. George & Mrs. Josephine Sanfratello from Illinois, United States.

Ms. Kimberley Richardson representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of the Marriott's Aruba Ocean Club bestowed the Goodwill Ambassador Certification to the honorees, presented them with gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by Mr. & Mrs. Sanfratello were:

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by Mr. & Mrs. Sanfratello were:

- Year-round sunny weather
- Aruba warm and friendly people
- "We feel at home"
- Aruba's delicious variety of foods
- The service in Aruba is wonderful ☐

Prosecutor's Office auctions several boats on March 24

ORANJESTAD - The prosecution will proceed with the sale of a dozen boats stored at the Marine Barracks in Savaneta on Friday, March 24, 2023.

These are boats taken into custody by the Coast Guard. These boats no longer need to be kept and will be sold to the highest bidder. As with the sale of the boats in previous years, you must register in advance with the Prosecutor's Office.

In doing so, you must adhere to the following:

You can register with the prosecution at ann.angela@omaruba.aw until Friday, March 17, 2023. In addition, you can call Ms. Angela at the OM at tel. 521-4135. After March 17, 2023, registration will be closed.



When registering, please include your:
 First name
 Last name
 Date of birth
 Country of birth
 Identity number (from your identity card, passport, or driver's license)
 Phone number.

Only persons registered with the OM may report to the barracks gate at 10 a.m. on March 24, 2023, to view the boats and submit a written bid for the boat of their choice. You must have with you the ID you provided when you registered. If you

do not have it with you, you will not be allowed entry. Children will not be allowed to enter.

The OM will notify the highest bidder per boat as soon as possible. After that, they can pay by transferring the amount. Payment is only possible by bank transfer. Swiping or cash payment is not possible.

Buyers can pick up the purchased boats upon presentation of the receipt of the payment of the price, the purchase contract, and the buyer's identification. The OM will notify the buyer of the date they can pick up the boat. The OM does not guarantee the condition of the boats. The sale is "as is where is. The buyer is responsible for transportation. ☐



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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure to recognize Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. These Ambassadors were respectively honored with certificates acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love to the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests whom have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

- Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Goodwill Ambassadors

Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Theresa Hudson from Pennsylvania, United States. Mr. & Mrs. Theresa have been coming to the island for 30 years consecutively.

Ms. Kimberley Richardson representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of the La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino bestowed the Ambassador certification to the honorees, presented them with gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and their home-away-from-home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the honorees were:

- Year-round sunny weather
- The weather's consistency
- Aruba's white sandy beaches
- Aruba's safety
- Aruba's warm & friendly people ☑



Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Bruce Nadeau and friends from Boston/Michigan**, who love the sun, surf and friendly people on the island. Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!

Create museum memories

ORANJESTAD — Museums are an integral part of conserving and honoring cultures, and Aruba is no exception. Our Island has a wide selection of various museums for our locals and visitors to see. Take this opportunity to learn about our island and experience a different day beyond the beach. Let us introduce to you these locations.

Museum of Industry Aruba

Museum of Industry in San Nicolas, better known as the art capital of Aruba. This museum presents the history of gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and tourism through elaborated displays and multimedia installations.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. The Water Tower was built in 1939 and consists of three sections: the substructure, the high-rising vertical shaft, and the tank at the top. The Water Tower was purchased by the Monuments fund in 2003 so it could be restored and preserved as one of Aruba's monuments. The Museum of Industry is part of Fundacion Museo Arubano (FMA), which is a foundation set to maintain, preserve, and protect the Aruban culture sector, history, and nature. The museum of Industry is open daily from 9 am till 1 pm.



For more information check out their Facebook page Museum of Industry Aruba.

Archaeological Museum of Aruba

The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is located at Schelpstraat 42 in downtown Oranjestad. The renovated historic Ecury complex in downtown Oranjestad has been transformed from a family home to a modern museum that preserves Aruba's Amerindian cultural heritage. This 21st century museum is especially designed to preserve valuable artifacts

dating back to the Pre-Ceramic period of 2500 BC.

In the late 1980's AMA identified its need for an adequate housing for its collection and activities. After studying various options, a project proposal was drawn up, including the acquisition and restoration of historical buildings in downtown Oranjestad.

These historical buildings were formerly the property of the Ecury family. The "Ecury Complex", is a cluster of single and two-story historic buildings, mainly

Dutch colonial architecture from the late 19th and 20th century on a plot of approximately 1.700 m2.

In 1997 the Aruban Government bought the complex for the National Archaeological Museum project. In 2004 a financial agreement was signed with the European Development Fund and in 2006 restoration and construction work began on the monumental buildings and the new to build exhibition space. In December 2007 the key to the complex was delivered and the museum's employ-

ees moved to the new location. The final design for the exhibit was completed in November 2007 and the permanent exhibit, financed by the Aruban Government and the Union of Cultural Organizations (UNOCA), opened in July 2009.

At the new location the National Archaeological Museum Aruba disposes of approximately 500 m2 for its permanent exhibit. This exhibit conveys through archaeological objects and modern exhibition techniques information on the origin and culture of the first inhabitants of the island. The new permanent exhibit gives the visitor an insight into the cultures that inhabited the island in Pre-Historical and Early Historical times. The museum also hosts an attractive public program including lectures, educational projects, temporary exhibits and workshops.

The museum is open daily from 9:30 am till 4:30 pm.

For more information check out the Facebook page Museo Arqueologico Nacional Aruba. [□](#)



Thayisa Farro: “Dancing has and continues to bring joy in my life”

(Oranjestad)—Thayisa Zieryani Farro is a young adult who has been, since very young, active in different hobbies. As an adult and currently working as a tax advisor, she still participates in activities and continues to practice her hobbies. In a special interview with our Aruba Today, she shares her life story, her hobbies and how she hopes to continue to be active for many more years to come.

BDA: Tell us a bit about yourself and your childhood.

Farro: “Aside from school, I had a very active childhood, where I had taken dance lessons, cuatro lessons, ping-pong and drawing lessons. Out of all these activities, it was dancing that I loved the most. After I finished primary school, I attended Colegio Arubano secondary school and at that time I knew that if I didn’t finish home work or finish studying, I would not be allowed to go to dance lessons, no matter how much I cried and begged.

Besides these things, I spent a long time with family, especially my sibling and cousins. We spent a lot of hours playing outside, going to the beach, riding bikes and playing ball games. It was a fun time.”

BDA: How old were you when you started in the dance world? And why did you choose dancing?

Farro: “I started ballet lessons at 4 years old at Simadanza with Miss Ina Profet. My mom put me in these lessons, because she never had the opportunity herself to do this. I ended up loving ballet after a few lessons. From there my love for dancing grew. Besides the lessons at Simadanza, I also danced with Pierewietje, with Miss Martha Figueroa. When I turned 10 years old, I started folklore lessons with Miss

Astrid Salazar from Simadanza. I slowly started participating in more dance lessons at Simadanza, including jazz-ballet, modern dance, street dance and tap dance.

When I went to study abroad, I took some dance lessons too. When I came back to the island, I went back to Simadanza. Now, as an adult, I participated in a few lessons at ArubaSalsa with Miss Melitza Bermudez and I’m currently dancing with Kids and Youth in Action.”

BDA: What did you study?

Farro: “When I was younger, I always wanted to be a dentist. When I finished secondary school, I was drawn out to study dentistry in The Netherlands. During this time, I went to Belgium to study biomedical sciences y obstetrics with the thought that I would be able to study dentistry later. Unfortunately, I was never chosen by the university. After 2 years, I returned to Aruba. This is when I was advised to study Law at the University of Aruba, because it was a very broad study. After I finished my Bachelor of Law, I did my Masters in Taxes at the University of Aruba and Maastricht; totally different from dentistry, but still a study that taught me a lot about our rights on the island.”

BDA: Do you feel that dancing made you the person that you are today?

Farro: “Looking back, I feel that dancing helped me become disciplined, determined and responsible. Dancing taught me to prioritize my time so I can finish my other obligations from school or work before I can dedicate it to dancing. It’s also a time where I can be creative and challenge myself so I can master a certain dance or choreography.”

BDA: you still dance. Is it something

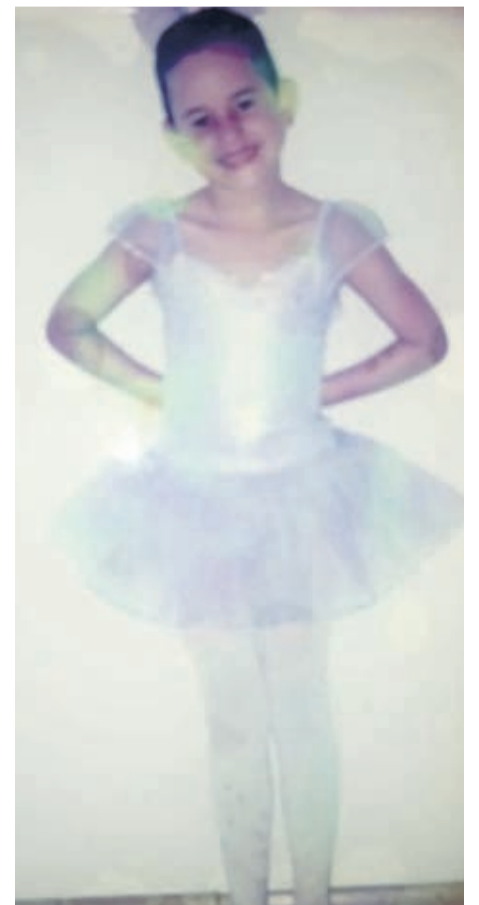


you see yourself doing for a long time?

Farro: “I sure hope so! Dancing has and continues to bring joy in my life. I got to know a lot of people through dancing and I’ll always have an admiration for them. During dance lessons, we would always laugh and have a great time. It’s a time where the stresses of everyday life disappear. Dancing has also been proved to reduce the risks for certain chronic illnesses, like dementia. For this reason, I wish to be dancing for many more years, so I can keep the mind and body strong and healthy.”

BDA: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Farro: In 10 years, I hope to still be dancing and be active in the dance and sports world. I hope to be in good health, spending more time with family and friends, and using my life experiences to help and inspire others.” □



CROSSWORD
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 41 Writer Jong
 - 1 Storage site
 - 5 Duel count
 - 10 "The Taming of the Shrew" city
 - 12 Before, in Bordeaux
 - 13 Star in Orion
 - 14 Half of deca-
 - 15 Mamie's mate
 - 16 Flattery, Irish-style
 - 18 Wheeled stretcher
 - 20 Mine yield
 - 21 Son of Hera
 - 23 Went ahead
 - 24 Captivated
 - 26 Bill stamp
 - 28 Krazy —
 - 29 Indian gown
 - 31 Qty.
 - 32 Bamm-Bamm's dad
 - 36 Competition, for short
 - 39 Log chopper
 - 40 "Tomorrow" singer

P	A	Y	G	A	P	A	B	C	S
A	T	E	A	S	E	C	L	U	E
M	E	A	N	I	E	T	A	P	E
			G	A	R	L	I	C	
B	A	G	S		A	N	K	H	S
E	R	R		D	I	N	G	B	A
L	E	E		A	C	E		E	N
O	N	E	S	I	E	S		L	O
W	A	N	E	S		O	T	I	S
			B	A	Y	L	O	R	
E	V	E	N		A	N	G	O	R
T	A	L	C		S	C	A	R	A
A	N	T	E		T	E	N	E	T

Yesterday's answer

- DOWN**
- 1 Parsley unit
 - 2 Short poem
 - 3 Yard tool
 - 4 Bill stamp
 - 5 One of a bear trio
 - 6 Declare
 - 7 Cheese-filled pastry
 - 8 Came in
 - 9 Didn't budge
 - 11 Einstein and Sabin
 - 17 Caustic stuff
 - 19 Catch some z's
 - 22 Used an aerosol
 - 24 Punk pioneers
 - 25 Harmonizes
 - 27 Melody
 - 28 Samurai sword
 - 30 Justice Fortas
 - 33 Too trusting
 - 34 Shine
 - 35 Age units
 - 37 Carousel, e.g.
 - 38 Comfy home
 - 42 Equip

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10				11					
13									
15				16					
18			19					20	
			21			22		23	
		24	25			26	27		
28				29	30				
31					32		33	34	35
36			37	38				39	
40						41	42		
43						44			
45								46	

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-16 CRYPTOQUOTE

G I Q A S B X K W G L Y G D F Q

X S I W R Y R N Y R G W B I Y R G L Q

G W Q R S Z G L W R Q Y D G L K W N N

Q T Q D A Q. — C S B D Y X N S D Q B J
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: ONE DAY I WILL FIND THE RIGHT WORDS, AND THEY WILL BE SIMPLE. — JACK KEROUAC



Customers stand in a queue outside a branch of the Northern Rock, the British mortgage lender, in Harrow, London, on Monday Sept. 17, 2007.

Associated Press

Bank runs used to be slow. The digital era sped them up

By KEN SWEET and STAN CHOE
The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A bank run conjures images of "It's a Wonderful Life," with anxious customers crammed shoulder to shoulder, desperately pleading with a harried George Bailey to hand over their money. The failure of Silicon Valley Bank last week had the panic but few other similarities, instead taking place on Twitter, message boards, cell phones and bank websites.

What made the failure of Silicon Valley Bank unique compared to past failures of large banks was how quickly it collapsed. Last Wednesday afternoon, the \$200 billion bank announced a plan to raise fresh capital; by Friday morning it was insolvent and under government control. Regulators, policymakers and bankers are looking at the role that digital messaging and social media

may have played in the collapse, and whether banks are entering an age when the psychological behavior behind a bank run mass fear from depositors of losing their savings may be amplified and go viral quicker than bank officers and regulators can successfully respond. "It was a bank sprint, not a bank run, and social media played a central role in that," said Michael Imerman, a professor at the Paul Merage School of Business at the University of California-Irvine. □

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 - Week 5/Unit 1315 (20k);
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 - Week 8/Unit 1409 (19k);
 - Week 10/Unit 1207 (17k);
 - Week 13/Unit 1509 (14k);
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Editor
Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
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Editors
Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angetette Figuereo

Sales
Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds
classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection
accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website
Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800
E: news@arubatoday.com
W: www.arubatoday.com
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'Quantum Leap' star Caitlin Bassett jumps from Army to TV

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Caitlin Bassett plays a woman who jumps through time and space on NBC's "Quantum Leap," a fitting job for an actor who has lived many lives already.

Bassett, who spent seven years in the U.S. Army, then attended law school and later acting school, now finds herself on a hit TV show, a multi-career path driven by her curiosity and heart.

"I think part of growing up is owning what you want to do and trying it and being like, 'If I fail, well, that's on me. But at least I tried,'" says Bassett, 32.

Bassett was an intelligence analyst in the Army, attaining the rank of staff sergeant, and completed three combat deployments two to Afghanistan and one to Qatar. She is grateful to the military for all that it nurtured in her.

"It gave experiences. It gave abilities. It gave discipline. It gave work ethic. It gave perspective. Like, at the end of the day, if no one's dying, we're having a good day," she says.

The new "Quantum Leap" takes place decades after the sci-fi classic left off. The first version starred Scott Bakula as a scientist who leapt between various bodies to help people solve a dilemma. In the se-



Caitlin Bassett attends NBCUniversal's 2022 Upfront press junket in New York on May 16, 2022. Bassett stars in the NBC series "Quantum Leap."

quel series, Raymond Lee plays the leaping scientist, and Bassett plays his guide, appearing during every leap as a hologram that only he can see and hear, revisiting the role played by Dean Stockwell.

The first episode is set on the day of Live Aid in 1985, and the time-leaping scientist wakes up as the getaway driver of a bank-robbing crew. Bassett's character gives him historical context and teaches him skills, like how to drive a stick shift.

In later episodes, he leaps into such predicaments as the cockpit of the space shuttle Atlantis in 1998, a

boxing ring in Las Vegas in 1977 and into the body of a female bounty hunter in 1981. Bassett's character has been given the appropriate background of a former military intelligence officer.

Bassett was too young to catch the original series when it aired from 1989-1993 but her parents and older siblings were fans. She admits she was terrified to revisit such a popular show. "In the age of reboots and sequels, nobody wants to mess up beloved things. At no point did I get into acting to really do a bad job," she says.

The revival has been a hit, and NBC has ordered a second season. Bassett sees it as a sort of empathy machine a weekly advertisement to try to understand other people.

"You literally are always having to learn what it's like to be someone else in their toughest moments, which often are their most defining and most formative in their lives," she says.

"Quantum Leap" executive producer and showrunner Martin Gero says what you see with Bassett is what you get and calls her a "once-in-a-lifetime discovery."

"There's really very little artifice there. She's an incredible person," he says. "To be catapulted into such a massive part on a massive franchise like this is pretty unbelievable and speaks to her very unique and singular ability."

Bassett was raised in Baltimore and comes from a military family. Her father served in Vietnam, and her grandfather served in World War II. She joined the military shortly after graduating high school at 18.

"I originally wanted to be a medic, actually, but I tested very highly and I actually got kind of talked into intelligence," she says. "I'm so grateful I did because I got to peek behind the curtain of how the world works that I never would have gotten working in a medical field." After her military service ended, Bassett moved to New York, where she attended Brooklyn Law School for two years before deciding to pursue acting full time and getting accepted to the prestigious Stella Adler Studio of Acting, graduating in 2020.

"Acting was always something that I had wanted to do, but it just felt like life hadn't created that opportunity. And then when I was in law school in New York, I saw my life once again taking a direction," she says. "So I left law school for theater school." □

Associated Press

Cat Stevens to return this summer with a new album



British singer-songwriter Yusuf / Cat Stevens performs at the 2016 Global Citizen Festival in Central Park in New York on Sept. 24, 2016.

Associated Press

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Legendary British singer-songwriter Cat Stevens will release a new album of original songs this summer that took the "Peace Train" hitmaker over a decade to make and revisits familiar themes of togetherness.

The 12-song collection is called "King of a Land" and comes out in June on George Harrison-founded Dark Horse Records. The album cover illustration shows a boy playing guitar on top of the Earth, as a cat stretches and a train

puffs along a track. The first single is the cheerful, family friendly "Take the World Apart," with the lyrics "I'll take the world apart/to find a place for a peaceful heart."

"The source of musical inspiration for this song came from the 50s. The smoochy harmonies and chords have an enchanting effect on the ear. Life was simpler then: lonely hearts yearning for love," he said in a statement to The Associated Press.

The album reunites Stevens with producer Paul Samwell-Smith, who produced

three Stevens albums between 1970-72 "Tea for the Tillerman," "Teaser and the Firecat" and "Catch Bull at Four."

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame member Stevens, who also goes by Yusuf, the name he took when he converted to Islam, has been a respected writer since releasing his debut in 1967.

He's had a string of Top 40 hits, from "Peace Train" and "Wild World" to "Morning Has Broken."

He was just named to Glastonbury's coveted Legends slot this summer. □

Rodgers plans to play for Jets in 2023, awaits Packers' move

By STEVE MEGARGEE
AP Sports Writer

Aaron Rodgers said Wednesday he intends to play for the New York Jets in 2023 after 18 seasons in Green Bay and the four-time NFL MVP quarterback is waiting for the Packers to trade him.

The 39-year-old Rodgers, speaking during an appearance on "The Pat McAfee Show" on YouTube and Sirius XM, said he believes the Packers want to move on and make 2020 first-round draft pick Jordan Love their starting quarterback.

"At this point, as I sit here, I think since Friday I've made it clear that my intention was to play and my intention was to play for the New York Jets," Rodgers said. "I haven't been holding anything up at this point. It's been compensation the Packers are trying to get for me, kind of digging their heels in."

Packers president and CEO Mark Murphy has acknowledged the team granted the Jets permission to talk to Rodgers, the face of the franchise since Hall of Famer Brett Favre was traded to the Jets in 2008. The Jets sent a contingent that reportedly included owner Woody Johnson, coach Robert Saleh and general manager Joe Douglas to Rodgers' home in Southern California last week.

Rodgers expressed his appreciation for his 18 seasons in Green Bay but added that it's time for the Packers "to do the right thing."

"I have nothing but love in my heart for every Packer fan and everybody who works in the organization," Rodgers said. "My life is better because of my time in Green Bay."

But we've just got to look at the reality. They want to move on. They don't want me to come back and that's fine. They're ready to move on with Jordan. That's awesome. Jordan's going to be a great player."

The Packers had no immediate comment on Rodgers' remarks, which follow days of speculation that his

time in Green Bay might be done.

Murphy spoke of Rodgers in the past tense while dis-

"Everything that I was told in the week that I was in Green Bay was: 'Take as long as you want and we

him realize the Packers probably didn't want him back.

"It was clear to me at that



Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers (12) reacts as he leaves the field after an NFL game against the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday, Jan. 2, 2022, in Green Bay, Wis.

Associated Press

cussing the quarterback's future with Green Bay TV station WBAY last week during an appearance at the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association girls basketball championships. "Very few players play for only one team," Murphy told WBAY. "Obviously Brett had a great career. Aaron had a great career here. Regardless of what happens, Aaron will be in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He'll be in our Hall of Fame. We'll bring him back, retire his number. This is just one of the things that we go through as a team. We want to try to achieve something that's good for both Aaron and us."

Rodgers had said at the end of the 2022 season that he would need time to decide whether to return to the Packers, request a trade or retire. He said Wednesday he had discussions with Packers officials regarding his future shortly after the team wrapped up a 8-9 season that ended a string of three straight NFC North titles.

want you to retire a Packer. If you want to come back and play, obviously the door is wide open," Rodgers said. "That was the information I was going on." As he pondered his future, Rodgers spent multiple days last month on a isolation retreat in Oregon, where he said he stayed alone in a room in total darkness.

Rodgers said he was 90% leaning toward retirement at the time of the retreat. When he was done with the retreat, he said, he noticed a difference in the Packers' approach toward his future with the franchise.

"Now when I came out of the darkness, something changed," Rodgers said. "I'm not exactly sure what that was, but something changed. ... I realized there had been a little bit of a shift. I heard from multiple people that I trust around the league players mostly that there was some shopping going on, that they were interested in actually moving me."

Rodgers said that made

point, that although the Packers were going to say the right thing publicly, that they were ready to move on," he said. "I don't know what changed that or what moved that if they just said, 'Hey, we need to make a decision here because he hasn't made a decision here yet.'

Again, there's no victims here. I'm not sitting here as a victim."

The Jets' interest in Rodgers has been apparent as they seek to end the NFL's longest active playoff drought. They lost their final six games while going 7-10 last season and haven't reached the postseason since 2010.

Their new offensive coordinator is Nathaniel Hackett, who earned raves from Rodgers while coordinating Green Bay's offense from 2019-21.

"There's a lot of reasons why the Jets are attractive," Rodgers said Wednesday. "But there's one coach that has meant as much to me as any coach I've ever had. And he happens to

be the coordinator there." Saleh and Johnson both expressed their interest in adding a veteran quarterback to a roster that already features one of the league's best defenses.

If Rodgers ends up with the Jets, it would be a case of history repeating itself.

The Packers sent a 39-year-old Favre to the Jets in 2008, a move that ushered in Rodgers' arrival as Green Bay's starting quarterback. Favre won three MVPs with Green Bay during his Hall of Fame career.

Rodgers backed up Favre for three seasons after the Packers selected him out of California with the 24th overall pick in the 2005 draft. Love has backed up Rodgers for three seasons since the Packers traded up to take the former Utah State quarterback with the 26th overall pick in 2020.

Rodgers' future has been the subject of speculation ever since the Packers selected Love.

Rodgers acknowledged the selection caught him by surprise. One year later, he skipped the Packers' mandatory minicamp in a standoff with Packers management.

But the two sides eventually patched things up.

Rodgers signed a contract extension with the Packers last year after producing a second straight MVP season. When he was asked last June at the Packers' mandatory minicamp whether he expected to finish his career in Green Bay, Rodgers replied, "Yes. Definitely."

Those plans apparently changed after a 2022 season in which he had his lowest passer rating as a starter (91.1) and threw 12 interceptions, his highest total since 2008. Now Rodgers believes his time in Green Bay is done.

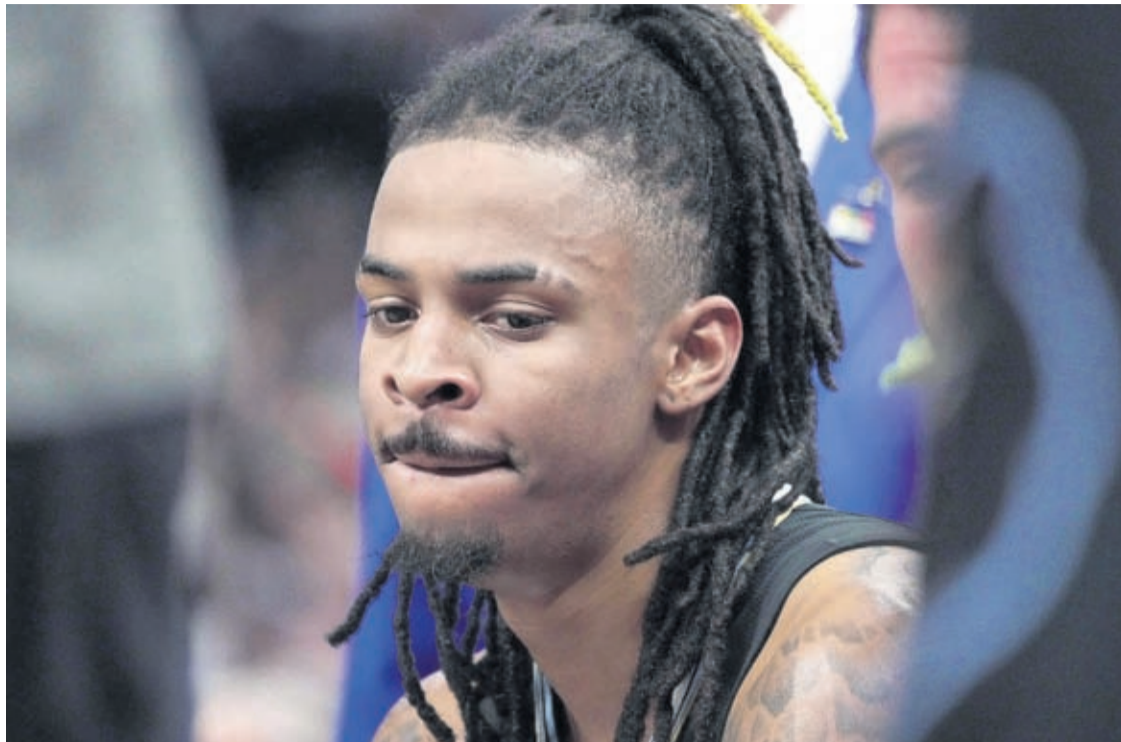
"Coming to this reality has been really bittersweet," Rodgers said. "I was drafted by Green Bay. I ... love that city, love that organization. Always going to have love for that organization.

But the facts are right now they want to move on, and now so do I." □

NBA suspends Ja Morant 8 games for video showing gun in club

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI (AP) — The NBA suspended Memphis Grizzlies guard Ja Morant eight games without pay on Wednesday after determining that his displaying a firearm at a club in suburban Denver earlier this month was “conduct detrimental to the league.” Morant will miss his sixth game when the Grizzlies play in Miami on Wednesday night. He will miss the next two games and be eligible to return on Monday when Memphis plays Dallas. The games he already missed will count toward the suspension, and Morant will forfeit about \$669,000 in salary. “Ja’s conduct was irresponsible, reckless and po-



Memphis Grizzlies' Ja Morant is shown during an NBA basketball game against the Los Angeles Lakers, Tuesday, Feb. 28, 2023, in Memphis, Tenn.

Associated Press

tentially very dangerous,” NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement. “It also has serious consequences given his enormous following and influence, particularly among young fans who look up to him.” Silver met with Morant in New York before announcing the league’s decision. The Grizzlies had no immediate comment; coach Taylor Jenkins is scheduled to hold his standard pregame availability Wednesday evening in Miami before the game against the Heat. The league’s investigation, which started almost immediately after the March 4 incident in which Morant livestreamed himself on Instagram, found that he was “holding a firearm in an intoxicated state” but did not prove that the gun was owned by Morant “or was displayed by him beyond a brief period.”

The league investigation also did not find that Morant had the gun with him on Memphis’ flight to Denver, or that he possessed the gun while in any NBA facility. Police in Colorado said last week that they looked into the circumstances surrounding the video and concluded that there was no reason to charge Morant with a crime. The Grizzlies initially said Morant would miss at least two games. Hours later, Morant said in a statement distributed through the agency that represents him that he takes “full responsibility” for his actions and that he was going to “take some time away to get help.” ESPN reported that Morant sought counseling at a facility in Florida. The two-game absence was followed by the team announcing last week that Morant would miss at least four more games, a stretch that concludes Wednesday. Morant then met with Silver on Wednesday as the NBA’s investigation was concluding. He knows now when he’ll be eligible to return.

It wasn’t immediately clear if Morant will be ready to play on Monday. □



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